

MRS. LYDIA PRATT BONNEY.

BY THE EDITOR.

THAT the wife plays an important part in the life of a man is obvious, but the quiet assistance which she gives him in innumerable instances and the influence which she exercises in many significant but undefinable particulars is but little appreciated. If a man becomes famous and if his deeds and accomplishments are praised, the unostentatious help which he has received from his wife is mostly forgotten or passed over in silence; yet without her his life would have been incomplete. She belongs to him and he to her. Without her he would have been different; his whole career would have taken another course, and it is even possible that he would not have attained the same success in life.

It is the wife that comforts a man in tribulation. She buoys up his spirits when they flag and she encourages him in the most critical moments of his development. She makes him manly, for true manliness can scarcely be thought of without the compensating presence of a wife, and every man is best characterised by the wife that stands at his side.

These comments apply with special force to the late wife of our venerable friend, the Hon. Charles Carroll Bonney.

Mrs. Bonney's maiden name was Lydia Pratt. She was educated in Troy at the Seminary of Mrs. Emma Willard, the famous pioneer in the higher education of women, and she distinguished herself in many ways as a good scholar, but especially by her rare talent for painting. While Miss Pratt was still in the primary grade, it happened that the teacher of art fell ill, and she was at once chosen by Mrs. Willard as her assistant.

In 1852 Miss Pratt visited her brother, Mr. Benoni P. Pratt, at Peoria, Illinois, and there she met on Dec. 3rd a young lawyer who by his steadfast character and sound knowledge had already

gained the confidence of his fellow citizens. It was her future husband Charles Carroll Bonney. They were married in Troy, N. Y., on August 16th, 1855.

Mrs. Bonney died on January 30, 1900, from a stroke of apoplexy suffered on the 10th of that month.

It was my good fortune to make Mr. Bonney's acquaintance at the World's Fair Congress Auxiliary of which he was the inaugurator and president. I came into close contact with him on several occasions during that memorable event, and I found



THE MAIDEN.

After a faded Daguerreotype.



THE WIFE.

After a photograph.

opportunity to admire his extraordinary administrative ability and the tact which he displayed. The crown and glory of all the congresses was the Parliament of Religions which was an unprecedented event in history and which became possible only through the extraordinary discretion with which the delegates of the several creeds and sects were treated.

Mr. Bonney as president of the Congresses showed an impartial justice and at the same time an unstinted friendliness toward all. He gave every one of the delegates the same chance of rep-

resentation, so that a lack of success could only be due, wherever it happened, to their own mistakes. As a fact, almost every one of them returned home contented. Every one had had a hearing, and every faith had had a fair chance of having its tenets explained to the expectant crowds of the large and mixed audiences.

Difficulties frequently arose, for the speakers enjoyed untrammelled liberty, yet the arrangements were such and the spirit of



THE MATRON.

Mrs. Bonney's latest picture.

the meetings so lofty that there was very little abuse of liberty, and whenever a storm threatened to disturb the peace, Mr. Bonney poured oil on the troubled waters, and always remained master of the situation. There was no outburst of discord that was not settled quietly, and without doing any harm.

One might have noticed in the several halls in which Mr. Bonney, on special occasions, made his appearance, a stately lady whose hair was turning white, watching every movement of the venerable President of the World's Fair Congress Auxiliary; it was Mrs. Lydia Pratt Bonney. How often did Mr. Bonney's office boy, who served as aide-de-camp, travel to the platform and whisper a few words or carry a slip of paper containing suggestions which (however trivial they may have been at the moment, sometimes merely relating to the acoustics of the hall and the effect of the speaker's voice) were not without influence upon the man who was the spirit of all these congresses. They represented a spiritual contact with a companion mind who watched over his movements, ever ready to assist him with advice and to keep him informed about the trifles that might mar the effect of the whole.

Mrs. Bonney was possessed of a distinguished presence. No one could see her without being struck by her queen-like, yet affable deportment. She seemed providentially chosen and adapted to do the honors at the receptions of the World's Fair Congresses.

Mr. Bonney, as we have learned in former numbers, is a poet and his Muse takes the flight of the higher style, soaring into themes sublime, such as the patriotic anthem which appeared under the title of "America," in *The Open Court* for December, 1901, or into the realm of religio-philosophical topics such as the New Year vision which was published in *The Open Court* for January, 1900. Mr. Bonney being a lawyer and a man of practical affairs, was very reluctant to publish his poetry, and it is only now when he is enjoying the evening of his well-spent life in the well-deserved rest of retirement, that he has ventured to allow his poetical lines, so far known only to his most intimate friends, to find a general public.

Owing to the fact that I showed an interest in his Muse, Mr. Bonney handed me some time ago a collection of his poems, and I noticed in the Table of Contents of these manuscript leaves some marked with crosses with the remark: "Not for publication." And he added that they are in a lighter vein and might therefore detract from the dignity of the other poems in which he had struck the key-note of the sublime. Such was Mr. Bonney's impression, but the truth is they were more personal and for that reason perhaps more generally human and poetical.

Having enjoyed the perusal of the poem "America" and other lines of a similar strain, I felt tempted to see what kind of poetry Mr. Bonney would cut out from publication, and I found that most

of the poems were dedicated to his wife and extolled the woman of his choice. Upon seeing Mr. Bonney again, I openly avowed my special interest in the lines which he had proposed to discard, and I very soon noticed that after all they were dearer to him than I might have supposed from his first comments, not because he liked the lines better but because the influence of his companion was still powerful upon him. If he showed any discrimination against these verses it was because they did not seem to express the dignity of her to whom they were addressed.

Since we cannot better describe a wife than by showing the effect of her influence upon her husband, and since a public man belongs to the public and the public have a right to see and know him, I propose (with Mr. Bonney's kind permission) to publish some of his poems in order to portray the significance of his wife in his career. There is nothing extraordinary in these productions, nothing that is startling, but they are typical of an alliance between two noble souls whose fates have been locked into one.

We let the poems follow in their natural order without further comment.

TO MY WIFE.

THE IDEAL.

Man is not all an element of earth,
 A being whose existence hath no aim
 Beyond mere sleep and labor ; and whose birth
 Is but the prelude to a life of shame :
 Which hath its dearest and its purest springs
 Of hope and joyment, in the world of sense ;
 Nor whose development of being, brings
 But chill and change upon sweet innocence.

But there is something from a higher sphere,
 Inblent with our mortality, which flings
 A glorious radiance o'er our pathway here,
 And lends its beautiful, its unseen wings,
 To all life's better moments, when the soul
 Thirsts for the waters of purer stream,
 And welcomes back the visions fair that stole
 From Eden-land, in youth's first blissful dream.

And in my inner being there doth dwell
 A pure Ideal of a sister heart ;
 A blending of each beauty whose sweet spell
 Hath been upon me, which can ne'er depart
 From out my memory—its lasting shrine.
 And it is with me ever ; and each hour

It mingles its own essency with mine,
 My idoled minister—Love's spirit flower.

It links me with all loveliness and truth,
 And I have twined around it, and still twine,
 A love whose fervor and whose dreamy ruth,
 Are not more earthly than they are divine.
 And I have dreamed, in some loved form to find
 The real of the ideal I have known—
 Dreamed of a union of our dual mind,
 Which yet is desolate, since all alone.

DREAMS.

I have dreamed of a glorious being—
 An angel in earthly shrine—
 A radiant spirit of beauty—
 With feelings attuned to mine.

Whose hopes, whose silent musings,
 Would echo all my own,
 And wake the pleasant music
 Of the spirit's lute-like tone.

And I've dreamed that years would bring me
 The real, whose vision dwells
 In my heart's best fane, as sweetly
 As flowers in wildwood dells.

I have dreamed of a rapturous meeting,
 With the spirit I've loved so long,
 With holy and passionate fervor—
 A being of dream and song.

I have dreamed of an quiet dwelling—
 A home where human flowers
 Would bud and bloom, to gladden
 Life's brighter, better hours.

And many a time, while dreaming,
 I have thought—I have felt her near—
 And my heart, too full for keeping,
 Ran o'er in a silent tear.

And over my spirit stealing,
 I have felt her holy smile,
 And dreamed she came and kissed me,
 And breathed a prayer the while.

And I know if I e'er should meet her,
 I should know, and of her be known,

And my soul, having found its sister,
Would no longer be alone.

HER FACE.

Though crowds of faces be before mine eyes,
They only see but one :
As in the glories of the summer skies,
We only see the Sun.

All other faces are but stars to me ;
I see them in the night.
'Tis only when her own dear face I see,
My soul is filled with light.
To other eyes, she may not seem so fair,
May be 'tis only mine
That, in the picture framed by her soft hair,
See charms that are divine.

Through her sweet eyes, I look into her heart,
And there I do behold
Such blessed beauty as no cunning art
Hath e'er to mortal told.

It is as though you looked in a sweet spring,
And in its mirror bright,
Saw sky and landscape fondly trembling,
As if they felt delight.

Of words, my love and I have little need ;
For if I only look
Into her face, I there her thoughts can read,
As I would read a book.

I have her picture whereso'er I stray ;
I keep it in my heart.
The precious treasure nought can take away ;
Of me it is a part.

And if I seem to worship this dear face,
'Tis no idolatry :
I only worship in it, God's sweet grace,
That shineth there on me.

It is my shield ; when evil thoughts assail,
It charms them all away :
Sooths passion's tempest to a summer gale,
And shows my feet the way.

So I am blest. Whatever may befall,
Whatever woes may come,

Her calm, sweet face shall cheer my heart through all
Till it reach Heaven, her home.

HER VOICE.

From my first memories, my inmost heart
Hath hungered for sweet sounds,
And always, at the touch of music's art,
My soul with gladness bounds.

The thirsty garden doth not drink the rains
With any more delight,
Than doth my spirit, all melodious strains
That show'r it, in their flight.

The language of the soul is melody ;
Love's native tongue is song ;
And all the blessed things of harmony
To its domain belong.

The notes of birds that sing the hymns of morn—
The voices of the trees—
The low, sweet words of waters, mountain-born—
The hum of honey bees.

The tones of anthems, sung in temples grand—
The songs of Italy—
The household memories of every land—
All these are sweet to me.

But I have found a living treasury
Of all I ever heard,
Of charming music, whatsoe'er it be,
Of streamlet, breeze, or bird.

It hath all tender cadences that art,
By instrument, hath made ;
All tones of sympathy that move the heart,
And are by love obeyed.

All its exquisite harmonies abide
Forever in my brain ;
And with the ebb and flow of their sweet tide,
Soothe all my spirit's pain.

It comforts, chides, encourages, and cheers,
Consoles and strengthens me ;
Dispels my doubtings, and allays my fears,
With its sweet melody.

Above all other music ever heard,
It is my fond heart's choice,
To hear, in some low, sweet, delicious word,
Her Own Beloved Voice.

HER NAME.

There is no music heard in happy dream,
No luring song of fame,
That to my ear one half so sweet doth seem,
As Her beloved name.

I hear it always, like the murmur dear,
Of soft wind, o'er the sea ;
And my fond heart, with echo sweet and clear,
Repeats the symphony.

When I awake and see the morning star,
Shine on Aurora's breast ;
It seems to whisper from its heights afar,
Her name of love and rest.

When mid the struggles of my daily life,
My heart feels faint and sore ;
Her dear name strengthens to renew the strife,
And I am sad no more.

When day is over, and the blessed night,
Comes with its holy calm ;
Her sweet name soothes my senses with delight,
And fills my heart with balm.

And always when I lift my heart in prayer,
I breathe most tenderly
Her name, and ask that all things good and fair
About her life may be.

I pray that neither her dear heart, nor mine,
May keep one wish or thought,
On which the blessing of the Hand Divine
May not be truly sought.

Pray that through all my life, her love may warm
My soul to noble deeds ;
While I, through every trial, grief, and storm,
Protect her as she needs.

'Tis not mere letters, formed into a word,
That make her blessed name ;
But the sweet tones, by love pronounced and heard,
That kindle feeling's flame.

THE OPEN COURT.

Its charming mystery cannot be told
 By pen, nor by the voice ;
 My heart alone the secret e'er will hold,
 And over it rejoice.

THE LIPS.

The lips are sacred. In the shining eyes
 The soul is only seen ; but on the lips
 Its very breath and sweetness softly lie,
 And whoso touches them its essence sips.

A kiss is therefore sacred and to be
 Regarded as a rose from Love's sweet land ;
 Not as an act of common courtesy,
 Like greeting of the voice or by the hand.

The heart, untaught, instinctively repels
 All common trade in kisses as profane,
 And 'gainst the sacrilege at once rebels
 With shameful feelings of indignant pain.

Then be the lips kept pure and beautiful,
 And kisses deemed the sweet reward of love ;
 And be the heart kept good and dutiful,
 And blessings will reward it from above.

TO MY BELOVED.

I. PREMONITION.

The thought of you awakes my inmost heart
 With fondest longing to be where thou art.

II. COMING.

The tender fall of your approaching feet
 Fills me with expectations, hushed and sweet.

III. GREETING.

The warm close clasp of your delightful hand,
 Is better than the gold of Ophir's land.

IV. WELCOME.

Your ardent kiss, my hungry heart doth fill,
 With the sweet gladness of its tender thrill.

TO LYDIA.

I am coming, sings the tide,
 O'er the ocean great and wide ;
 And I bear upon my breast
 All the wealth of peace and rest,

For which the weary soul so long hath sighed.
 God grant it may be so
 Ere the wintry breezes blow,
 And that you and I, My Dear,
 May enjoy the coming year
 More than any since the day you were my bride.

SEMPER FIDELIS.

Forever faithful! not alone in ways
 Of violet-bordered gladness, but as well
 In sorrow's dreary, cypress-shaded paths.

Forever faithful! not alone when joy
 Is singing anthems in the spirits' fane,
 But when anxiety, fear, pain, and grief
 Bear some dead hope to burial through its aisles.

Forever faithful! in the little things
 Of life, as in the great, for in the least
 Oft hide the mightiest. An eagle's egg
 Is a small thing, and greatest battles turn
 On seeming trifles. One unfaithful deed
 May blight a life, or change a nation's course.

Forever faithful! if the earnest soul
 That legend on its banner ever bears,
 And on Fidelity, as on a rock,
 Builds up the temple of a worthy life,
 It will be blest. No outward adverse fate
 Can take the treasures of the soul away.

Semper Fidelis! write upon my heart,
 O sovereign Lord, these words, and give me strength
 To live them fearlessly and prove them true.

THE HOME.

To God, whose goodness hath provided it,
 And to the service of our fellow-men,
 Without whose kind support and confidence
 No one is blest with true prosperity,
 With grateful hearts we dedicate this house.

Here let the social virtues all abide;
 Here let domestic peace assert its sway;
 Here let wise recreations be prepared;
 Here let the arts and sciences find friends;
 Here let the muses have their votaries;

Here let all honest labor be approved ;
 Here let all sorrows meet with sympathy ;
 Here let all worthy effort meet with praise.

And here against all infidelity ;
 Against all selfishness and avarice ;
 Against all scandal, hatred, and ill-will ;
 Against all idleness and vanity ;
 And other foes of honor, faith, and peace,
 Be constant and successful warfare waged.

Here be the Prince of Peace acknowledged Lord ;
 Here be the Golden Rule acknowledged law.
 And when the poor and sorrowing see this house,
 May they ask God to bless it for their sake.

MY WIFE.

I pray for thee each night before I sleep,
 I pray for thee each morn when I awake,
 Asking the Lord in safety thee to keep
 And from thy dear heart every sorrow take.

Indeed my thoughts of thee are all a prayer,
 That thy dear breast from toil may find repose,
 And all the desert of thy daily care,
 Rejoice and bloom, like Sharon's lovely rose.

And I entreat the Lord to make me such
 A husband as I ought to be to thee ;
 Entreat him that I may not grieve thee much
 By anything that is amiss in me.

PROMISE.

As in the bud the blossom's beauty lies,
 Till, in the fulness of the summer days,
 It opens to soft winds and shining skies,
 And all its fragrant loveliness displays :

So in the baby's arch and dimpled face,
 And all the sweet ways of her babyhood,
 Are blessed omens of a riper grace,
 Adding new beauty to each childish mood.

As in the verdure of the laughing spring
 We read the promise of autumnal store ;
 And when the baby birdling tries its wing
 We see it in the future rise and soar ;

So in the child we see the woman smile
 And feel the charms of the approaching years ;
 So when her new-born dignities beguile
 Our weary hearts, replacing care with cheer,

We think, with mingled faith and hope and fear,
 Of all the future for the dear one keeps ;
 Then with firm heart repress the starting tear,
 And trust in Him whose mercy never sleeps.

We pray that He will guide in peaceful ways
 Her tender feet, and make her wise and strong,
 Will comfort her in all life's winter days,
 And keep her safe from every harm and wrong.

Try not too soon, dear bird, the sunny air,
 Stay the unfolding of thy leaves, sweet flower,
 Be as thou art, so happy and so fair,
 We would not speed thy years a single hour.

HER BIRTHDAY.

(September 29, 1868.)

Her Birthday is dawning, shine softly, Oh sun,
 Touch lightly her beautiful eyes ;
 She is lovelier now than the day she was won,
 Bend tenderly o'er her fair skies.

Soft breeze from the billows, sweet wind from the plains,
 Come, laden with melody's dreams,
 Sing lullaby music, in tenderest strains,
 Bring visions of valleys and streams.

Let all the bright angels that guarded her birth,
 Return to caress her to-day ;
 To measure with gladness the wealth of her worth,
 And guide her dear feet in thy way.

Rise, Children, to bless her and cherish her name,
 Who never missed yours in her prayers ;
 She justly your love and your homage may claim,
 Who gives you a Mother's fond care.

Sing hymns in her honor, wreath flowers in her hair,
 For this is the day of her days,
 And she who our sorrows and trials doth share
 Hath right to our love and our praise.

Oh blessed and bounteous Heaven send down
 Thy Gladness to bless her to-day ;

Thy Peace, to encircle her brow like a crown,
Thy Love, to sustain her away.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING.

Blessed are they who see the fiftieth year
Of wedded life dawn on their love, and hear
Each in the other's voice the sweet refrain
Of their betrothal vows come back again.

Blessed, who after half a century
Of mingled joys and sorrows still can see
It was the gracious Lord's benign command
That bade them meet life's trials, hand in hand.

Blessed are they whose children round them throng,
To celebrate with feast and cheer, and song,
Their Golden Wedding. Well may they upraise
Their voices in triumphant hymns of praise.

I DREAM OF THEE.

TO ONE IN HEAVEN.

When the last morn-stars are beaming
From the amethyst of heaven,
And away are slowly streaming
The shadows Night hath given,
When golden sunbeams falling
Upon the deep blue sea,
To life are ripples calling,
Dear One, I dream of thee.

When glad free birds are singing
Their orisons at morn,
And wild sweet blossoms springing,
And holy thoughts are born,
When brooklets bright are leaping
Along so merrily,
Through bloom-decked valleys sweeping,
I dream, I dream of thee.

When balmy breezes sighing
Make music mid green leaves,
Like low dear love-tones dying
When some fond spirit grieves;
When dew-stars bright are shining
On blushing bloom and tree,
And hope, bright love-wreaths twining,
I dream, dear one, of thee.

Where'er the glow of beauty
From eyelight, or from flower,
Or voice of truth-toned duty,
My heart thrills with its power ;
Whene'er a voice of gladness
Gives some dear tone to me,
Awakes perchance sweet sadness,
I dream, I dream of thee.

When twilight's blush is stealing
Sweet o'er the silent earth,
And purest, deepest feeling
Hath with the stars its birth,
When pure prayer heavenward goeth,
Like dew-drops from the lea,
My soul thine own soul knoweth,
Oh, do you dream of me ?

Whene'er the soft moon floateth
Up in the azure sky,
And every glad soul noteth
Bright angels floating by,
Whene'er the daylight fadeth
And slumber comes to me,
And sleep's dark pinion shadeth
My soul, it dreams of thee.

I dream, Oh beautiful spirit flower,
I dream, I dream of thee
In every place, at every hour,
Oh, dream you thus of me ?
At morn, at noon, at starry even,
I dream, dear one, of thee,
Oh glorious child of the spirit land,
Say, dreamest thou thus of me ?